

ISOKO Y'UBUZIMA

Quarterly Newsletter October-December 2022

Isoko y'Ubuzima is a 5-year USAID-funded project implemented from July 2021 through July 2026 by a consortium led by Water For People in Rwanda to improve WASH service delivery.



Through public-private partnerships, Isoko y'Ubuzima is bringing down the price of sanitation products



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ISOKO Y'UBUZIMA



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ROAD TO UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO SAFE DRINKING WATER



Gonzague Matsiko,
Nyagatare Vice
Mayor in charge of
Finance and Economic
Development.

Non-functional water supply systems in need of rehabilitation, new communities lacking connection with water supply networks, and the need to accurately predict population growth and climate change in the near and distant future – these are just a few of the major challenges that rural districts in Rwanda face and strive to overcome to achieve sustainable access to safe water for all of its citizens.

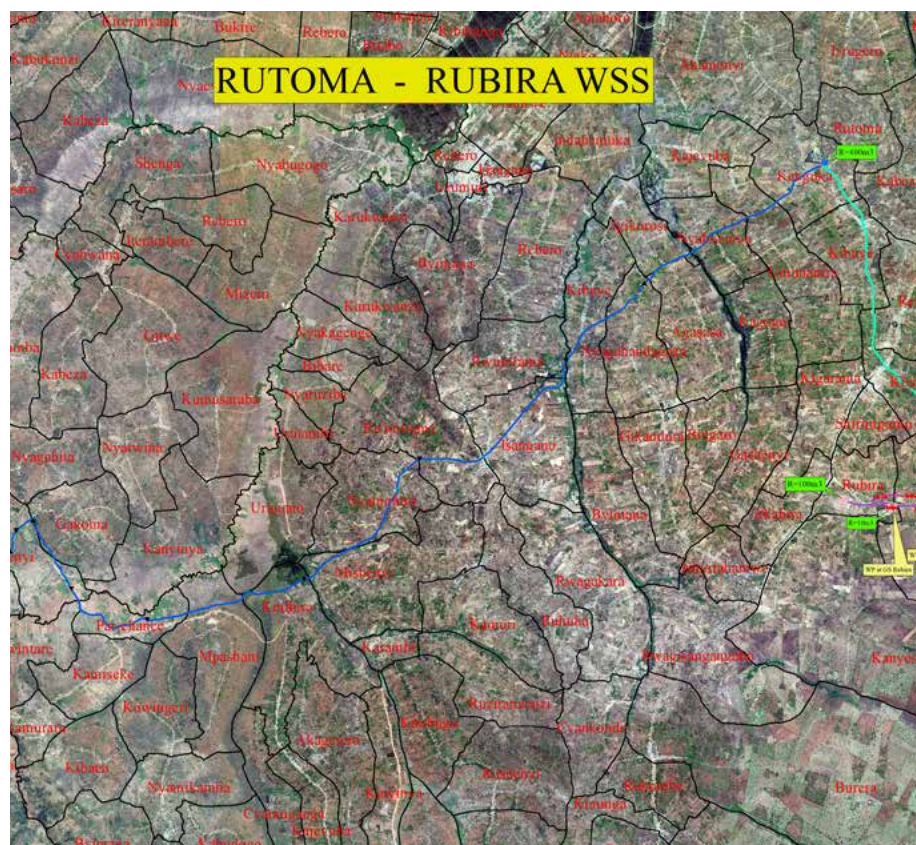
Can the districts fix these issues all alone? It would be very difficult. The government, the private sector,

communities, and development partners all must collaborate effectively to overcome these huge challenges.

Experts indicate that the sustainability of water supply systems is at risk if the approach to achieve universal coverage is not done properly, by considering not only the infrastructure needs of today, but also the maintenance and management costs of the coming years, and issues successfully addressed today may reappear very soon. The efforts to monitor WASH

infrastructure have observed that if mechanisms are not put in place to sustain what has been put in place to ensure universal WASH coverage, in most cases the new investment in water supply system do not last longer as they become non-functional in the following year.

Important questions must be asked, and answers provided to ensure sustainable water supply systems. Examples include: What are the infrastructure maintenance and operational costs over time, and are districts budgeting accordingly?



The Rutoma-Rubira water supply network is 13.3 kilometers long and will serve more than five thousand Rwandans.

project is operating, 941 kilometers of new water supply systems, benefiting more than 383 thousand Rwandans, need to be constructed. Additionally, 6,832 kilometers of pipes must be totally or partially rehabilitated to benefit more than 187 thousand Rwandans. This year, Isoko y'Ubusima will invest more than RWF 3.6 billion to rehabilitate 454 kilometers of water supply systems representing only 6.6%, thus, a need for other district partners to join the effort.

Based on these designs, discussions are ongoing in districts for partners to contribute to responding to the highlighted needs to construct new water supply systems, rehabilitate other systems that are partially or completely non-functional, and provide local communities access to clean water.

Do districts and private operators have qualified personnel to carry out management tasks such as generating accurate plans for water supply systems, and predicting when maintenance or rehabilitation works will be needed? How will the pressure of population growth impact water supply in the future? How can the water supply be shared to cover the needs of human consumption, agricultural irrigation, livestock, and businesses? Asking these questions will help ensure mitigating measures are put in place to sustain the basic level of service. Sustainability can only be achieved if districts and partners work in sync to answer these questions.

The good news is that is happening. Indeed, the USAID-funded project Isoko y'Ubusima is making effective contributions. One of these is the development of detailed engineering designs of water supply systems that districts will need to reach 100% access to drinking water for the

population in eight districts.

The project commissioned 80 freelance engineers (10 per district) to produce these designs, which included digitalized maps, plans and technical drawings, profile and hydraulic calculations, bills of quantities, and estimate budget for the proposed water supply networks (new, extensions and existing non-functional to be rehabilitated). These engineering designs were validated by the districts, as well as other relevant district partners such as the Ministry of Infrastructure, the Water and Sanitation Corporation, Local Administrative Entities Development Agency, and non-governmental organizations operating in water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) and are now an essential tool with which they will develop investment plans.

The designs show that to immediately achieve a basic level of service in the water supply to the communities in 10 districts of which the Isoko y'Ubusima

"Isoko y'Ubusima is a good partner... with the produced designs the project paved a way for others to contribute and bring solutions," says Gonzague Matsiko, Nyagatare Vice Mayor in charge of Finance and Economic Development.

"The designs are very useful and serve as a vital step for other district partners to come on board and bring solutions toward sustainable access to drinking water, and this is happening with World Vision," Gonzague adds.

The Vice Mayor gave an example, confirming that recently, the non-governmental organization (NGO) World Vision entered discussions with the Nyagatare District to construct the Rutoma-Kibuye-Kigarama-Rubira water supply network that was designed by Isoko y'Ubusima and validated by the district. This is a 13.3-kilometer-long network that will serve more than five thousand Rwandans.



Engineers hired by Isoko y'Ubuzima, mapping water sources and designing new water supply systems to serve remote villages.

Elsewhere, in Kirehe District, the Ministry in charge of Emergency Management (MINEMA) and the World Bank have prioritized funding the rehabilitation of the Mayizi water supply system that was also designed by Isoko y'Ubuzima, to promote socio and economic inclusion for refugees and host communities. The Mayizi network is 66.7 kilometer-long and 35.9 thousand Rwandans will benefit from it.

However, whether the water supply systems are built or rehabilitated using funds from the districts, Isoko y'Ubuzima, World Vision, World Bank, or any other partner, the challenge remains how to make certain that the water supply systems are sustained over the next 20 years and more.

To respond to this challenge, Isoko y'Ubuzima provided training in 2022 to all districts and the Water and Sanitation Corporation (WASAC) on full lifecycle costing, which considers the technical and financial requirements to keep the water supply systems functioning properly during their entire lifespan. Based on this training, Isoko y'Ubuzima will support its 10 implementation districts in 2023 to develop full life cycle WASH investment plans to help district WASH offices predict and plan for their future water, sanitation, and hygiene needs, taking into consideration parameters such as new infrastructure, maintenance, replacements, and operational costs for all their WASH infrastructure. In addition to predicting and planning for their WASH needs, districts will use these WASH investment plans to attract new donors to support their efforts to reach universal access to safe water.

A ROBUST SUPPLY CHAIN OF WASH PRODUCTS ON THE HORIZON

During the open day, local businesses had an opportunity to showcase the sanitation products they offer.



The sanitation business faces supply chain-related challenges including but not limited to stock-out issues, few sanitation products, lack of water spare parts, lack of network and communication among different business players, lack of data on the potential market demand, and lack of business partnerships among the supply chain players - such as manufacturers, District Sanitation Centers (DSCs), community showrooms, sales agents, pit emptiers, associations of toilet builders/masons -, lack of capital investment, lack of communication with financial institutions that are supposed to provide

loans, lack of marketing and supply strategies.

All these issues lead to a weak sanitation business subsector and hence do not attract entrepreneurs to invest tangible amounts in sanitation businesses especially when it comes to investing in rural areas. Consequently, the community is poorly served, and poor sanitation-related health issues cannot be eliminated, which negatively contributes to the perpetuation of the poverty circle in rural areas.

To bridge the gaps and contribute to Rwanda's ambitious target to achieve

total access to sanitation by 2030, Isoko y'Ubuzima facilitated an open day event at Camp Kigali in December to bring together key players in the supply chain as an opportunity to showcase different water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) products and services, establish networks, strategize, negotiate, and produce business partnerships.

The open day gathered 31 actors in the supply chain, water sanitation, and hygiene products suppliers, entrepreneurs, especially DSC operators, private operators in water supply, and pit latrine emptiers.

Bank of Kigali was represented by its Corporate Banking Relationship Officer.

A stronger private sector

Sanitation plays a vital role in preventive health care and quality of life. Rwanda has an ambitious target to achieve total access to sanitation by 2030. However, the government itself cannot achieve that goal alone without active participation from other players. The active participation of the private sector among others can be one of the sure ways to achieve the target.

Members of the private sector that participated in the open day exchanged ideas on the key products needed to be available at DSCs, as well as the business opportunities that resulted from connections. It was an opportunity for every exhibitor to showcase their products and services, and propose innovative ideas, strategies, or approaches for partnership among suppliers and entrepreneurs.

However, not all DSC operators have enough initial capital to purchase sufficient products which can slow the business progress, hence the need to negotiate affordable loans with financial institutions with the facilitation of Isoko y'Ubuzima.

"The doors are open for you. Come to Bank Of Kigali anytime and we will ensure your needs are fulfilled," said at the event Dushime Eugene, the Relationship Officer Corporate at the Bank of Kigali while talking about the role of financial institutions to bring some solutions.

Discussions led to suppliers such as SUPA Ltd agreeing to sell products to DSCs at the wholesale price, Purifier Ltd proposed DSCs be the representative at the district level. Bank of Kigali committed to discussing flexible financial services to all categories of sanitation entrepreneurs from all districts.

The effort is in line with the Isoko y'Ubuzima project approach to support the sanitation business by establishing and strengthening a well-structured supply chain. This enabling environment will facilitate WASH products to reach the last mile in our area of intervention.

To reach the objective, Isoko y'Ubuzima has continued the activity of monitoring and reinforcing existing DSCs created by Isuku Iwacu and will create four more new DSCs.

The DSCs, which are at the front of the private sector in the community, serve as marketing and communication tools through which sanitation becomes visible and tangible for the residents of the district. In general, DSCs are supposed to play three main roles notably, selling WASH products and services, facilitating the training of professionals, and exhibiting sanitation technologies.



Private operators showcased a variety of WASH products.



On the business aspect, DSC operators are supposed to display WASH products for example SATO pans, toilet seats and slabs, hand washing equipment, ventilation pipes, insect screens, splats, household rainwater harvesting equipment, water purification products such as filters, chlorine tablets, hand washing facilities, and pumps, hygiene products such as soaps and biological detergents, household energy equipment, safety equipment among others.



SHOWROOMS UP AND RUNNING



USAID and Nyabihu District staff interacting with the Kora community showroom owner .

On a certain afternoon, in the busy business center of Kora, Nyabihu District, Leonard Nizeyimana, a reputed salesman, is receiving clients arriving in his shop to buy daily commodities.

In one corner, there are shelved SATO pans, pads, toilet papers, and soaps. This is a corner specifically reserved for sanitation products: It's a community showroom, an idea promoted by Isoko y'Ubuzima.

One couldn't tell that he only heard about the need to add sanitation

products in his shop recently, and thus, bring them closer to the community.

"I started selling sanitation products six months ago, after being trained by Isoko y'Ubuzima," says Leonard.

"I have been selling products such as pads, toilet papers, and SATO pans with no major challenge, people are buying sanitation products," he adds, when explaining how he found compelling the idea of mixing the products he normally sells with sanitation products.

He says Isoko y'Ubuzima provided him with technical guidance and was linked with Nyabihu District Sanitation Center (DSC).

Exactly, with the Isoko y'Ubuzima project, this is how the supply chain of sanitation products is supposed to work. A DSC gets sanitation products from wholesale suppliers. As the center can't cover the whole district, it collaborates with community showrooms, which are established at the sector level, to bring the products closer to the community. Trained community mobilizers take

the products from the showrooms and promote them in the community.

In Nyabihu District, this process is set into motion, and the DSC and at least the Kora community showroom insist they are collaborating with impact and vow to improve the business performance.

There are indications that the businesses here will continue to grow, thus, the citizens to be served. The DSC opened in December 2019 with RWF 1 million capital investment and now has grown to RWF 3 million. Its operator says the center constructed toilets for 10 neighboring households.

In addition to the Kora showroom, the DSC has linkage partnerships with 3 community showrooms of Bigogwe, Jomba, and Shyira that regularly purchase products.

Across the 10 districts of Isoko y'Ubuzima implementation, 41 community showrooms have been created.

INCLUSIVE BASIC SANITATION, OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES

Through public-private partnerships, Isoko y'Ubuzima is bringing down the price of sanitation products. Here, a representative of one of the private operators selling SATO stools explains their importance to improve sanitation.



Thousands of rural households in Rwanda still lack access to sanitation and hygiene services. And for people living with disabilities, the lack of access to hygiene and sanitation services and products is even more complex.

Rwanda aims to reach universal access to basic sanitation and hygiene services by 2024 and safely managed by 2030; presently, 89.6% of the households use improved sanitation according to the 2020 Rwanda Household Survey.

With all the efforts, sanitation and hygiene services and products are not close enough to the community, and where they are, households struggle to afford them. And how is the situation for persons with disabilities?

"Despite the efforts, persons with disabilities still have challenges accessing sanitation products specific to us, including SATO stools," says Theophile Gakuru, who is a representative of persons with disabilities

in the Kabarondo Sector.

SATO stools are very important for a household to construct an improved latrine and get in the bracket of families the country considers as having basic sanitation. Once installed on the latrine, they block the bad smell and flies from coming out. For the elderly and persons with disabilities, they enable effortless squatting.

Boosting the supply chain

Jean Jean Damascene Harelimana, the Kayonza District Vice Mayor in charge of Social Affairs calls for an enhanced partnership to ensure sanitation and hygiene products are available to members of the community, especially persons with disabilities.

"It's imperative to increase the availability of products and services needed to improve welfare for persons with



Theophile Gakuru is a representative of persons with disabilities in the Kabarondo Sector.

disabilities, in households and the community," the Vice Mayor says.

Isoko y'Ubuzima, a 5-year USAID-funded project implemented by a consortium led by Water For People in Rwanda, collaborates with districts, and private operators to create an environment where communities can easily and affordably access hygiene and sanitation products and services.

For instance, in Kayonza District, the project has established 4 showrooms in Murundi, Rukara, Mukarange, and Kabare sectors. Nationally, 11 districts now have Sanitation Centers, and Isoko y'Ubuzima has now added 41 showrooms, bringing sanitation products and services to the sector level.

To mitigate the affordability issue, the project works with microfinance institutions to create low-cost sanitation loan products available to members of the village savings and loan associations (Ibimina).

Also, District Sanitation Centers (DSCs) are connected to retailers of sanitation products, while Isoko y'Ubuzima facilitates negotiations for delivery at a discount, and the DSCs access the capital from microfinance institutions and increase their stores.

The project, whose other members of the consortium are Care International,

African Evangelistic Enterprise (AEE), Vitens-Evides International (VEI), and IRC, works, through community mobilizers, to educate people on the importance of improving sanitation and hygiene practices. The latter obtain sanitation products from the established showrooms and sell them in the community.

"[Isoko y'Ubuzima] helps people to understand what products and services are available and why they are so

important. In addition to that, we are looking at the entire trade chain of commodities and how to make sure that those products are brought closer to the community" says Kurt S. Henne, the Isoko y'Ubuzima project Chief of Party.

For persons with disabilities, their participation in the project activities implementation for the entire approach to social and behavior change and demand creation is key to its success.

"Isoko y'Ubuzima values the role of

persons with disabilities in program implementation, and I am one of them. I conduct advocacy through this project activities implementation to put the spotlight on the plights of persons with disabilities, specific to water, sanitation, and hygiene," explains Theophile.

He also urges community and civil society members to continue to speak out for the remaining challenges to be addressed.



CELEBRATION OF INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The day served as an opportunity to raise the awareness of about 250 people including 60 from the category of persons with special needs about a variety of sanitation products available at the DSCs and community showrooms.

THESE ARE SELECT PICTURES FROM THE EVENT.



IMPLEMENTATION KEY HIGHLIGHTS

32,220	People mobilized on sanitation and hygiene best practices and investment through mass media communication channels using a mobile van.
15,789	People mobilized on sanitation and hygiene best practices and investments through interpersonal communication channels.
589	Village agents trained on increasing village saving and loans associations (VSLAs') awareness of products, pricing, and markets.
515	Latrines were built or improved including 145 newly constructed and 370 improved.
56	DWASHB members from Ruhango, Nyanza, Nyamagabe, Ngororero, and Nyabihu districts received refresher training on the standard operating procedures of DWASHB in Rwanda, as well as on advocacy for universal water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services.
400	New school and hygiene clubs created.
8	Districts that validated water supply detailed engineering designs supported by the Isoko y'Ubuzima project.
212	VSLA members took a loan to improve their sanitation facilities and 132 SATO pans were purchased.
73	VSLAs contributed Rwf 2,613,260 to purchase sanitation and hygiene products.
14	Non-revenue water 5-year strategic plans developed and water supply private operators trained on business profitability assessment with completion of the establishment of District Metered Areas in 9 districts.



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